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DAILY
CONVERSATION
WITH
G O D,

Exemplified in the

H O L Y L I F E

O F

ARMELLE NICOLAS,

Commonly call'd the

GOOD ARMELLE;

A Poor Ignorant COUNTRY MAID
in FRANCE.

B R I S T O L:

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DAILY
Conversation with GOD,
Exemplified in the
HOLY LIFE
OF
ARMELLE NICOLAS, &c.



AS soon as I wake in the Morning, *saieth she*, I throw myself into the Arms of my heavenly Love, as a Child into the Arms of his Father. I rise with a Design to serve and please him. And if I have Time to pray, I fall upon my Knees in his holy Presence, and speak to him, as if I really saw him with my bodily Eyes. I give myself up, wholly
to

to him, and desire him to fulfil all his holy Will in me, and that he would not suffer me that Day to do the least Thing which might be offensive to him. Then I recommend to him all the Prayers which shall be made that Day. In short: I love and praise him as much and as long as my Affairs permit; tho' very often I have hardly so much Time as to say the Lord's Prayer. But I do not trouble myself about that; for I have God always in my Heart, as well when I am about my Business, which I do in Obedience to his Will, as when I retire on purpose to Pray to him. This he himself has taught me, that whatever I do out of Love to him, is a real Prayer.

I dress myself in his Presence, and he shews me that his Love supplies me with Raiment. And when I go about my Business, even then doth he not forsake me, nor I him; but he converses with me, and I with him; yea, I am

then as much united to him, as when I am at my Prayers, set apart on purpose for my spiritual Recollection. O! how sweet and easy is all Labour and Toil in such good Company! Sometimes I perceive such Strength and Support in my Mind, that nothing is too hard for me, and I think myself alone able to manage the Affairs of the whole Family. Nothing but the Body is at Work, the Heart and myself burn with Love in the sweet Familiarity I entertain with God.

I eat and drink in his Presence, as I do every Thing else, and it is as if I dipped every Bit in the precious Blood of my Saviour, and as if he himself gave me Food, on purpose to inflame my Love, and to engage it the more to himself. I leave you to judge, what Effect this must have upon my Soul. Indeed it is impossible for any body to express it but God himself. As for me, my whole Life would never be sufficient to give an Account of it.

When I am about my Business in the Day-time, running up and down, till the Body begins to be weary, or to repine, or to desire unseasonable rest, being oppressed with Anger and Uneasiness; my divine Love enlightens me forthwith, and shews me, how I ought to suppress those rebellious Motions of corrupt Nature, and not to nourish them at all, either by Word or Deed. This Love keeps the Door of my Lips, and watches over my Heart, that it may not in the least contribute to such irregular Passions, which thus are crushed and subdued as soon as they rise.

But if at any Time, for Want of Care, I am surprized with these or the like Faults, I cannot be at Rest, till I have obtained Pardon, and God be reconcil'd to me. I lie prostrate before his Footstool, confessing all my Faults to him, as if he did not know them already, and there I continue, till he has forgiven me, renewed his Friendship

with me, and confirmed it more than before. For so it always happens through his infinite Mercy, whenever I have committed a Fault, it serves very much to inflame my Heart more and more with his divine Love. If People persecute me, and by foul and uncharitable Censures raise Scandals upon me, or any other Way afflict me; or if evil Spirits attack me with their crafty and cunning Temptations, I then presently run to my heavenly LOVE, who readily stretches forth his sacred Arms to receive me, shewing me his Heart and Wounds open for my Security; in which I hide myself as in a strong Castle or Fortrefs. And then I am so mightily strengthened, that if the whole Army of Hell itself, together with all the Creatures, should rise up against me, I fear them no more than a Fly, because I am under the Protection of the most high God, his Love being the Hiding-place and Safe-guard of my Soul.

If

If God at any Time hides his Face, making as if he would go away from me, I tell him: O! 'tis no Matter, my Love, conceal thyself as much as thou pleasest, nevertheless I'll serve thee; for I know that "thou art my God." And then I stand upon my Guard more than ever, to be faithful to him, for fear of displeasing my Love. And at the same Time perceiving the Greatness of my Misery and Poverty, I insist the more upon the Merits of our Saviour, and resolve to rest contented, tho' it should please him to leave me all the Days of my Life in such a Condition. But he never lets me continue long under these Circumstances, and if I may venture so to speak, he cannot forbear loving me, any more than I can live without him.

At his Return he recompenses the little Moment of his Absence with so many Caresses and Endearments, that often-

oftentimes I am not able to bear them, but forced to cry out: I can receive no more! wherefore “ I desire him to moderate my Sensation, or else to let me die under the “ powerful Sense of his gracious Presence. ”

Many Times, to bear this the better, I left all, retiring into a Corner to ease myself, by giving Vent to the Tears and Praises due to his Majesty, where-with my Heart was overcharged. And this I may do very well, since it is not the mere Sense of his Kindness I long for, but rather HIMSELF ALONE, that I desire to enjoy. Although in the mean Time one ought thankfully to receive these extraordinary Tokens of God's Mercy and Love, if it be his holy Will so to deal with us.

If I am persuaded on Holidays, to be merry in Company, I excuse myself. For nothing can be compared to the Pleasures of my Love, which are so much

much the sweeter and greater, for my withdrawing from all Company whatsoever. If they wonder, how I can stay always at Home alone, I think within myself: " O! if you knew the glorious Company I have, you would not say that I was alone: For I am never less alone, than when I have no body with me. "

After this Manner I spend not only working Days, but Holydays too, being often as much employed in the latter as in the former. Eut that is no Hindrance to me, to whom Labour and Rest, hard Work and easy, all Things are indifferent, since I do not look upon what I have to do, but upon him, for whose Sake I do it. I am so taken up with his Love, that I have not Time to mind myself, nor any thing else but him alone.

But if I do any Thing amiss, or out of Season, the same Moment I feel a violent Pain and Sorrow for what I have

have done, springing from my Love, which also makes me Presently hope for pardon; so that thinking of it no more, I go straight forward on my Way, turning aside neither to the Right-hand, nor to the Left. Neither do I remember what is past, or to come, but only, that I may love God to the utmost of my Power.

The Night coming on, and every one going to rest, I find Rest only in the Arms of divine Love: I sleep leaning on his holy Breast, like a Child in his Mother's Bosom. I say, I go to sleep, but being still busied about the Love and Praises of my God, till I fall quite asleep. Many Times this Love rouzes up all my Senses, so that I cannot sleep the greatest part of the Night, but I spend it in the Embraces of the lovely Grace of God, which never forsakes such a poor miserable Creature as I am, but preserves me, and takes special Care of me.

If

If in the Night the evil Spirits hover about, to torment or surprize me, (which often happens) this divine Love guards me, and fights for me. Yea, it gives me Grace too, to resist them courageously, as if I were awake. For they seldom continue long to assault me, unless it be in my Sleep.

And this is the Life I have led for these twenty Years past, without perceiving the least Change of that Love which was poured out into my Heart, after my sincere Conversion unto him. Nay, I have observed its daily Increate, tho' every Day it seemed impossible to endure any Addition to what I already enjoy'd. But truly, it is an infinite Love, which satisfies and nourishes me, so that every Day I have a new Hunger, tho' methinks I can receive no more, than what I possess already every Moment.

The Author of her Life says, among many other Observations, that

for a long while she could bear no other Discourse but of God and his holy Love. *I cannot imagine*, said she, *how a Soul created for Heaven, can be concerned about the Dross of this World.* From that Time, if she happened to be in Company, where the Subject of the Discourse was but indifferent, either she did not mind it at all, entertaining herself the mean while with God; or, as soon as she thought it proper, she diverted and changed the Discourse; thinking it but lost Time, which was spent in the Trifles of this World.

To every Body that had a Mind to be acquainted with God Almighty, she gave this Advice: ‘ To be silent, and to
 ‘ learn to keep their Thoughts together
 ‘ in the Centre of the Heart: For this,
 ‘ *said she*, is the Beginning of our Union
 ‘ with God, and by these Means the
 ‘ Soul forgets earthly Things, and raises
 ‘ herself up to the Contemplation of heavenly Objects. We ought to lose our
 ‘ Fami-

Familiarity with the Creatures, if we desire to enjoy the Conversation of the Creator; a Moment of which doth afford more Delight and Satisfaction, than all the finest Discourses in the World.

She declared once, that she did by no means encourage any Desire of knowing what did not concern herself. When a certain Person asked her, whether she did not know such a Story, that the Town rang of at that Time? She answer'd, 'No; and gave God Thanks, that she never knew any Thing of the News of this World, neither did she desire to know it. But she knew a great deal of News concerning the Love and Mercies of Almighty God. For this she said was the only Thing she desired to know, and wherewith her Heart was entirely taken up.'

She had a real Experience of the inward and spiritual Life of Grace, *viz.*

B

One

One Time when her Mistress was afraid that *Armelle* was like to run quite mad by an Excess of Devotion, she forbid her all spiritual Exercises; and would not let her go even to Church, except on the Lord's Day only: *Armelle* being sensible of the false Step her Mistress took, smiled within herself, saying, ' Truly, I am not mad, after I ' have found my Beloved, whom I now ' love with all my Heart. I remember a Time when I was seeking only ' God without me, and then I was mad ' indeed. ' This Mistress of hers being of a sour and morose Humour, shew'd a great deal of Ill-nature to *Armelle*, of which, however, she never complained, but rather thank'd God, that he was pleased to make this a Means of her fuller Purification. When her spiritual Director himself, seeing what she suffered in that House, advised her one Time entirely to quit that Place, she replied according to her usual Earnestness: ' Why would you
' have

‘ have me flee from the Cross, which
 ‘ the Lord himself has entailed upon
 ‘ me? No, by no Means: I shall ne-
 ‘ ver do it, except you absolutely com-
 ‘ mand it. If I should undergo a thou-
 ‘ sand Times as much, I shall never for-
 ‘ sake the Place for all that, but rather
 ‘ stay till they turn me away by Force.’

In which unexpected Answer her Spirit-
 ual Director entirely acquiesced, never
 prompting her again to quit a Place,
 where she had a daily Opportunity to
 practice *Patience* and *Self-denial*; Vir-
 tues so much contrary to the whole
 Bent of corrupt Nature, and yet so ne-
 cessary for rightly framing a Christian
 Life and Conversation. At another
 Time she said: ‘ If the Soul be but
 ‘ well grounded in the Favour of God,
 ‘ and lively affected with the Operations
 ‘ of his Grace, all the Insults of the De-
 ‘ vil, and of the Creature, are born with
 ‘ Joy and Comfort. But that is Mis-
 ‘ ery indeed, when the Lord himself
 ‘ withdraws from the Soul, and let’s her

‘ shift for herself. Then she thinks,
‘ that every Step is a Step into Sin and
‘ Corruption, being utterly unable to
‘ protect herself against it. ’

In what Company soever she was,
she talked of nothing more, than of *be-
ing faithful to God*. Nothing dropp’d
more from her Mouth, than *Let us be
faithful; let us be faithful to the Lord*.
This Word she thought fit for any
Time, and suitable to every Company.
Now and then she would repeat it an
hundred Times over; and being ask’d
by her Friends whether she had nothing
else to say: She answer’d, ‘ Don’t won-
‘ der at my saying this over and over a-
‘ gain. If I should live a thousand
‘ Years, I should still tell ye the same
‘ Thing. For ’tis Faithfulness, where-
‘ in the Perfection of a Christian Life
‘ consists. ’

Of the constraining Power of the di-
vine Love, she has the following Ex-
pression:

pression: ' Whenever I happened to
 ' adhere a little too much to my natural
 ' Inclinations, (apt to steal upon the
 ' Mind under the specious Pretence of
 ' Necessity) I was immediately reprov-
 ' ed by the Love of God. This divine
 ' Love is like a careful Tutor, who
 ' takes all the Pains imaginable, for ad-
 ' vancing his Pupil in the Way of Learn-
 ' ing he is engaged in; and for this Rea-
 ' son keeps his Eye constantly fixed on
 ' him, both to correct his Failings,
 ' though never so small, and to prevent
 ' his being led away by any Thing that
 ' might divert him from his chief Em-
 ' ployment. Thus, *says she*, dealt the
 ' Lord with me. He kept me closely
 ' confined to an holy Awe and Wari-
 ' ness; and when I happened by one
 ' Oversight or other to withdraw, as
 ' it were, from his Eye, he in that ve-
 ' ry Moment pursued after me, and re-
 ' call'd me to my Duty. But all this
 ' was done with so much Love and
 ' Tenderness, that it must be a Heart

‘ of Brass, if not mollified by such en-
 ‘ dearing Marks of Love and Kind-
 ‘ nefs.’

Of the disorderly Love to Friends and Relations, which now and then even well disposed Souls are too much guilty of, she gives the following Account:
 ‘ One Time, *says she*, my Parents came
 ‘ to see me; when I entertained them,
 ‘ I found myself transported with some
 ‘ vain Joy and Pleasure, and somewhat
 ‘ coldish in minding the Impressions of
 ‘ the Love of God; nay, it seem’d as
 ‘ if the Lord himself did in a manner
 ‘ withdraw from me, to let me have, as
 ‘ it were, the more Liberty for the pre-
 ‘ sent. But no sooner my Parents were
 ‘ gone, and I come to myself, the Bur-
 ‘ den and Affliction I then felt upon my
 ‘ Spirit was heavy enough, since I did
 ‘ not find him whom I lov’d more than
 ‘ my own Soul. However, as soon as
 ‘ I came Home, I felt again a noble
 ‘ Return of the divine Love, and it
 ‘ was

‘ was, as if the Lord had waited for
 ‘ me, on Purpose to communicate him-
 ‘ self unto me. ’

After this she freely confessed, that from that very Time she found herself entirely freed from all Manner of irregular Adherency to her Parents, whom she was too fond of heretofore, being now only taken up with the grand Concern of promoting the more spiritual Part of her Friends and Fellow Creatures: ‘ Thus, *says she*, the Love of
 ‘ God made every Thing, nay even my
 ‘ very Faults and Imperfections, redound
 ‘ to my greater spiritual Good and Wel-
 ‘ fare.

She was a most shining Pattern of herself in her whole Life and Conversation; but it most visibly appeared in that unwearied Readiness and Quickness she dispatch’d every Thing tending to promote the Glory of God in her Station. She often wonder’d at some People’s dilatory Doings in the Service of

God, and said, it was a cunning Fetch and Stratagem of the Devil, to make People put off from one Day to another such Designs as might serve to advance the Glory of God, and the Good of our Fellow Creatures. ‘ *For, said she, it often happens, that that Grace which at one Hour offers itself to a Man, in order to support him under some difficult Enterprizes, is not so easily met with at another Time.* And besides this, how uncertain is our Life! Nay, if we were sure to live longer, yet ought we not to linger upon that Account at all, nor to defer from one Day to another what might be done this Day. A Man that is full of Delays in the Service of God, must needs have but little Love at the Bottom. *Where-ever Love is raised to any considerable Degree, there the Soul can’t rest, whilst there remains any Thing to be done required by the Beloved.* And this dilatory Temper, *said she,* was a great Impediment in the Way to Perfection. Many Souls were convinced of the Will

' of God, but being too backward con-
 ' stantly to struggle against the corrupt
 ' Propensions of their dull and lazy
 ' Temper, they made but a slow Pro-
 ' gress in the Work of Religion. They
 ' say, To-morrow, To-morrow it shall
 ' be done in good Earnest; but that To-
 ' morrow never comes. The Conse-
 ' quence whereof is, that the longer
 ' they flatter themselves in their disor-
 ' derly and wonted Customs, the less
 ' able they are to resist them at last at all:
 ' The Lord leaves them now to their
 ' own Will, since they did not improve
 ' faithfully what once they had received.'

The Virtue of Humility was as re-
 markable in this holy Maid as any of the
 rest; ' I was astonished, *says she*, when
 ' my Father told me to *watch against*
 ' *Pride*; for I thought whilst I was
 ' well in my Wits, I could not possibly
 ' be proud. I was so fully convinced
 ' that any Thing really good was from
 ' God, that if all the Angels and Men
 ' had offered to perswade me to the con-

' trary, I should never have believed
 ' them. And this Sense fortified me a-
 ' gainst all Manner of Pride and Pre-
 ' sumption, my own Conscience never
 ' charging me with the least Guilt of
 ' that Vice, and I could not imagine
 ' how it was possible, that Men should
 ' attempt so heinous a Thing as this.'

She had always a high Esteem for
 her low Condition. ' She said, she
 ' would never change her Condition,
 ' (which was that of a Servant Maid)
 ' except she was visibly convinced of
 ' the Will of God. For tho' her Sta-
 ' tion was but mean, yet she was more
 ' pleased with it, than with all the Pray-
 ' ers and Contemplations she perhaps
 ' might enjoy in the most concealed
 ' Solitude of the World. She said, her
 ' outward Employment and all the Drud-
 ' gery she was put to, did not at all cool
 ' or weaken the Sense of the Love, and
 ' of the gracious Presence of the Lord,
 ' she usually enjoyed. Nay, the more
 ' fervent she was to spend herself intire-

ly in Works of Charity, chearfully
 ‘ complying with every Thing incident
 ‘ to her Life, the more plentiful Incomes
 ‘ she had of the Love and Favour of
 ‘ God. Hence, it would but be the
 ‘ Effect of a false Heart, if one should
 ‘ make bold to quit his outward Em-
 ‘ ployment, in order to gain more Rest
 ‘ and Quiet in another Place. *God,*
 ‘ *says she, knows Ways to find Souls where-*
 ‘ *ever they be, if they do not wilfully shut*
 ‘ *their Hearts against him.*’

When she look’d upon the happy
 State she was arrived to, and the severe
 Doom attending profligate Wretches,
 she used to say, ‘ She seemed unto
 ‘ herself like one that had been in a
 ‘ great Storm at Sea, and by Strefs of
 ‘ Weather like to be cast away every
 ‘ Minute ; but getting off at last safe
 ‘ and sound, remembered now a-shore
 ‘ the Dangers her Brethren and near
 ‘ Relations were still expos’d to, being
 ‘ toss’d up and down in the huge Ocean,
 ‘ and left to the Mercy of the roaring

Billows. Alas! *said she*, thus it is
 with me, when I lay to Heart the
 Dangers Sinners run themselves into.
 For the more endearing Marks of di-
 vine Grace the Lord has been pleased
 to bestow upon me, the more fervent
 is my Desire, that also others might
 partake of the same with me.

Dr. *Watts* in his Character of this
 Young Woman says; in his Discourses
 of the Love of God, page 268: 'This
 was the Frame and Temper, this the
 devout Language of *Armelle Nicolas*,
 a poor Servant Maid, who had spent
 more than thirty Years of her Life
 in the constant Exercise of divine Love.
 God has not sent me (says she) into this
 World but to love himself, and through
 his great Mercy I have loved him so-
 much, that I cannot love him more, af-
 ter the Manner of Mortals: I must
 go to him, that I may love him after
 the Manner of the Blessed.'

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